



**To:** Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee  
**From:** Travis Lowe  
Kansas Dental Hygienists' Association  
**Date:** February 17, 2021  
**Re:** Support of SB 129

Chairman Hilderbrand and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support of Senate Bill 129, a proposal to authorize the training and practice of a mid-level oral health provider called the dental therapist. I am Travis Lowe, appearing on behalf of the Kansas Dental Hygienists' Association (KDHA).

The Kansas Dental Hygienists' Association represents over 2,300 of the state's actively practicing registered dental hygienists. KDHA works to advance the art and science of dental hygiene by ensuring access to quality oral health care, increasing awareness of the cost-effective benefits of prevention, promoting the highest standards of dental hygiene education, licensure, practice and research, and representing and promoting the interests of dental hygienists.

SB 129 would create a mid-level practitioner between a dental hygienist and a dentist. In order to become a dental therapist, they must first hold a license as a registered dental hygienist. Dental hygienists already have at least three years of formal education, have taken clinical and national board examinations, and are licensed in the state to practice with a specific scope. A dental hygienist would then add more two years of education and training to become a licensed dental therapist enabling them to perform an additional 31 procedures beyond what a dental hygienist can do today.

For veterans of the Legislature, this is a familiar topic. In fact, this concept first reached this committee in 2011, attracting input from a vast group of stakeholders. The first eight years of deliberation saw a divided industry with little common ground. However, this changed in 2018 after the Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee approved SB 312, referred to then as the "compromise bill." SB 312, supported in this committee by both the Kansas Dental Hygienists' Association and the Kansas Dental Association, was advocated as the middle ground approach and ultimately passed the Senate 38-0.

SB 129 is the same 2018 compromise language re-introduced with the only changes being the enactment dates. KDHA remains true in its consistent support of this compromise as a practical way to move forward.

This compromise language holds every benefit today that it provided in 2018 when it passed the Senate 38-0. In contrast to original proposals:

- The bill removes or modifies every proposed dental therapist procedure then requested by the Kansas Dental Association.

- The bill includes a specific definition of “direct supervision” as requested by the Kansas Dental Association.
- The bill provides a limit that a dentist can supervise no more than three dental therapists, which was not included in original proposals.
- The bill requires a report submitted is to the Legislature in the year 2032 to evaluate the new program.
- The bill adds one dental therapist to represent their profession on the Kansas Dental Board, which was reduced from two representatives in original proposals.

By its nature, as stated by the bill’s proponents in 2018, the compromise bill found common ground as it removed the most contentious elements where the state’s industry representatives could live with it and say “yes”.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, SB 129’s scope of practice for dental therapists closely mirrors the Commission of Dental Accreditation’s Standards for Dental Therapy. These standards were developed and approved by the Commission on Dental Accreditation in 2015.

On behalf of KDHA, we respectfully urge the committee to continue support the Senate’s position to approve this compromise effort.

Respectfully,

Travis Lowe